

*"I really like Wikipedia, but I don't trust it":*  
Understanding First Nations peoples' experiences  
using Wikipedia as readers and/or editors



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Department of Critical Indigenous Studies, Macquarie University. 2024.  
Report commissioned by Wikimedia Australia.

## About the artwork

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**Golden Waterways | © 2024 | K.J | Yorta Yorta**

‘Golden Waterways’ is my interpretation of the waterways and waterholes, all connected, depicted in ancient dot work techniques. It illustrates the value of our waterholes and waterways to our people, of our land. I’ve used the gold colour to represent its value to all who look at this artwork.

*This artwork was created through The Torch, a not-for-profit organisation that provides art, cultural and arts industry support to First Nations people currently in, or recently released, from Victorian prisons.*

**[thetorch.org.au](http://thetorch.org.au)**

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*“I really like Wikipedia, but I don’t trust it”*: Understanding First Nations peoples’ experiences using Wikipedia as readers and/or editors was commissioned by Wikimedia Australia and undertaken by researchers at the Department of Critical Indigenous Studies at Macquarie University led by Distinguished Professor Bronwyn Carlson.

### **Acknowledgement of Country**

The Department of Critical Indigenous Studies is located on the lands of the Wallumattagal clan of the Dharug speaking peoples. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and recognise the continuity of knowledge that nurtures community and Country.

Wikimedia Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands upon which we live, work and share knowledge. We acknowledge their continuing knowledge authority and pay our respects to Elders, and leaders, past and present.

The researchers and Wikimedia Australia would also like to acknowledge and thank all the First Nations participants who shared their experiences of using Wikipedia as readers and/or editors. Your time, knowledge, and generosity are greatly appreciated.

### **A note on terminology**

There is no universally agreed upon terminology for referring to the many diverse groups who comprise the First Nations peoples across the continent colonially referred to as Australia. In this report, the terms ‘First Nations’ and ‘Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples’ are used. The term ‘Indigenous peoples’ is also used when referring to the global context.

### **Content warning for First Nations peoples**

First Nations peoples please be advised that this report may contain comments from participants that some might find distressing and that relate to misinformation, racism and online violence.

*This project was funded by Wikimedia Australia and the Wikimedia Foundation.*

[www.wikimedia.org.au](http://www.wikimedia.org.au)



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# Executive Summary

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This research was commissioned by Wikimedia Australia in response to previous feedback from First Nations editors identifying that the platform is not always user-friendly for First Nations peoples as both readers and editors. The research was conducted by the Department of Critical Indigenous Studies, Macquarie University.

This research project was underpinned by an Indigenist Research Methodology (Rigney, 1997) and utilised three qualitative data collection methods: individual semi-structured interviews, yarning circles, and an online survey. To be eligible for inclusion in this research project, participants had to be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person aged 18 years or older, with experience using Wikipedia as a reader and/or editor. There was a total of 34 participants.

Based on the data collected as part of this research project through interviews, yarning circles, and the online survey, the following conclusions can be drawn:

## **1. Use**

It is likely that Wikipedia is popularly utilised by First Nations peoples, with relative satisfaction, for a wide range of topics and purposes, and as more of a starting point for any academic research.

## **2. Awareness**

It is likely that many First Nations peoples have a limited awareness of how content is written and edited on Wikipedia, and of other Wiki platforms.

## **3. Editability**

For First Nations content, the open editability of Wikipedia serves as an advantage as well as a challenge.

## **4. Benefits of First Nations content**

Many First Nations peoples are likely to not rely on Wikipedia for any information pertaining to First Nations peoples, communities, histories, cultural practices, languages and current events. However, some First Nations peoples do for a variety of reasons. There are benefits for both First Nations peoples and non-Indigenous people being able to access certain First Nations-specific information on Wikipedia.

## **5. Cultural safety**

Some content on Wikipedia that pertains to First Nations peoples can be culturally unsafe for First Nations peoples to view. The absence of cultural warnings means this information can be unintentionally viewed.

## **6. Racism**

There is racism evident in the content and editing of Wikipedia pages.

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## 7. Control of First Nations content

There are no hard and fast rules for exactly what information pertaining to First Nations peoples and cultures is appropriate to be made available on Wikipedia, and there are valid concerns amongst both First Nations peoples and Wikimedia Australia regarding who has control over deciding this. Content on Wikipedia that pertains to First Nations peoples is regularly written, read and edited by other non-Indigenous people without any First Nations input or control. There is interest amongst First Nations people in being editors of Wikipedia content, but there are obstacles to this.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered:

- 1. Establish a First Nations Advisory Board** for Wikimedia Australia comprised of paid First Nations peoples from a range of sectors to advise and assist in how best Wikimedia Australia can build relationships with First Nations communities, recognising the heterogeneous nature of First Nations cultures and communities, the complexity of the information to be included, and the need to accommodate and respect multiple viewpoints.
- 2. Increase awareness** around the current process of creating and editing Wikipedia content amongst First Nations communities. Awareness-raising activities can be developed in consultation with the Advisory Board and may involve creating and housing resources that explain protocols around how content is written and edited on Wikipedia, as well as simplified how-to editing guides for editors. It is also recommended that the current complaints procedure (Wikipedia or Wikimedia projects) be reviewed to assess if it is fit-for-purpose and promoted as part of awareness-raising activities.
- 3. Re-evaluate open-access editing of First Nations content** to determine if it is indeed appropriate. Understanding that Wikimedia Australia can do certain things but cannot set policies and procedures broadly for Wikimedia projects.
- 4. Encourage First Nations participation as editors** by creating editing training and other paid opportunities such as residencies and First Nations projects for First Nations peoples.
- 5. Address racist and otherwise offensive or incorrect content** pertaining to First Nations peoples and cultures. Possibly through the development of a Cultural Safety Standards policy for Wikipedia editors, and a review of citations used on Wikipedia pages regarding First Nations matters including the removal of all Creative Spirits and outdated citations and adding First Nations sources.

For details of the findings, conclusions and recommendations, please see the full report.

# Background

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## Wikimedia Australia

Wikimedia Australia<sup>1</sup> is the Australian chapter of the international Wikimedia Foundation. They are an independent, not-for-profit organisation and registered charity that supports their members, the broader community and partner organisations to contribute to Wikipedia, Wikidata and other Wikimedia platforms through events, training and partnerships.

Wikimedia Australia supports the mission of the Wikimedia Foundation to empower and engage people around the world to collect and develop educational content under a free license or in the public domain and to disseminate it effectively and globally. As a chapter of the Wikimedia Foundation, they offer their members an official voice in the global Wikimedia community.

Wikimedia Australia's purpose is:

- To grow and promote the development and sharing of free knowledge through open source software systems
- To develop educational resources to grow participation in Wikimedia platforms and projects
- To increase public awareness and support for Wikimedia platforms and projects

Wikimedia Australia trains people and organisations to learn about and how to edit Wikipedia and other Wikimedia platforms; supports experienced editors to continue to grow and develop their contributions to Wikimedia platforms through networking and training; runs workshops, edit-a-thons and events with a network of Wikimedia Australia Facilitators; codesigns programs and partnerships that address gaps and bias on Wikimedia platforms; facilitates local engagement in global campaigns like Wiki Loves Earth and #1Lib1Ref; connects regional editors with the global editing community; and advocates for open access and the creation of free cultural works.

## Wikipedia

Wikipedia<sup>2</sup> is part of the suite of programs offered by Wikimedia and is an internet-based encyclopaedia which is the world's largest and most popular reference website and one of the top 10 most visited websites globally.

Wikipedia is built on the principle<sup>3</sup> that anyone can edit its content, and it therefore aims to have as many of its pages as possible open for public editing so that anyone can add material and correct errors. Wikipedia pages are largely written collaboratively and anonymously by volunteers, known as 'Wikipedians'. There are Wikipedias in over 300 languages, and this report will only cover English Wikipedia, the largest by audience and content.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://wikimedia.org.au/wiki/About> for more information.

<sup>2</sup> See [https://wikimedia.org.au/wiki/Frequently\\_asked\\_questions](https://wikimedia.org.au/wiki/Frequently_asked_questions) for more information.

<sup>3</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Five\\_pillars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Five_pillars)



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Wikipedia's five pillars<sup>4</sup> are:

- Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia
- Wikipedia has a neutral point of view
- Wikipedia is free content
- Wikipedians should interact in a respectful and civil manner
- Wikipedia does not have firm rules

Wikipedians talk to each other on the 'talk' section of page articles to discuss and coordinate page edits. There are different roles assigned to editors based on their editing experience; anyone can watch a page to monitor changes<sup>5</sup> and some more experienced editors and bots patrol<sup>6</sup> Wikipedia pages to check for bad edits.

Wikipedia's policies and guidelines<sup>7</sup> are developed by the volunteer editing community to describe best practices, clarify principles, resolve conflicts, and otherwise further Wikipedia's goal of creating a free, reliable encyclopedia. It is not a requirement for Wikipedians to read any policy or guideline pages before editing. The five pillars are a popular summary of the most pertinent principles. Although Wikipedia generally does not employ hard and fast rules, Wikipedia's policy and guideline pages describe its principles and agreed-upon best practices. Policies are standards all users should normally follow, and guidelines are generally meant to be best practices for following those standards in specific contexts. The policies and guidelines are intended to always be applied using reason and common sense.

<sup>4</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Five\\_pillars#:~:text=Respect%20your%20fellow%20Wikipedians%2C%20even,on%20 the%20part%20of%20others](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Five_pillars#:~:text=Respect%20your%20fellow%20Wikipedians%2C%20even,on%20 the%20part%20of%20others) for more information.

<sup>5</sup> Watching a Wikipedia page means anyone who has subscribed to 'watch' the page gets a notification each time article changes occur or there is activity on the 'Talk' section of a page.

<sup>6</sup> When a page is marked as 'patrolled' it means that another Wikipedian has checked the page edits and verified that the edits are not spam or otherwise problematic.

<sup>7</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Policies\\_and\\_guidelines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Policies_and_guidelines) for more information.

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## **The Research Project**

In 2023, Wikimedia Australia commissioned the Department of Critical Indigenous Studies, Macquarie University to undertake research to identify ways to better understand the experiences of First Nations peoples (referring to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples) using Wikipedia as readers and/or editors.

Wikimedia Australia requested the research team interview 30 First Nations peoples. Wikimedia Australia has previously consulted with First Nations editors of Wikipedia who identified that the site is not necessarily user friendly for First Nations peoples (see Thorpe, Sentence & Booker, 2023). Wikimedia commissioned this research to gain a better understanding of First Nations peoples' experiences with Wikipedia. Wikimedia Australia identified six objectives for this research project:

### **1. Trustworthiness, accuracy and cultural sensitivity**

Assess the current perceptions and experiences of First Nations people regarding Wikipedia:

- Identify the extent to which First Nations people currently rely on Wikipedia as a source of information and the factors influencing their trust or mistrust in its content.
- Understand how First Nations people perceive general information, as well as the accuracy and cultural sensitivity of Wikipedia articles related to their cultures, histories, and perspectives.

### **2. Engaging in editing**

Identify the drivers and barriers that influence First Nations peoples' participation in editing Wikimedia projects:

- Determine the motivating factors that drive or inspire First Nations people to contribute to Wikipedia (or Wikimedia projects) and the specific areas of interest or expertise they possess.
- Explore the challenges or concerns that may discourage First Nations people from engaging in editing activities, such as issues of representation, cultural protocols, or lack of technical skills.

### **3. Interest and opportunity to be involved**

Explore interest from First Nations people to get involved in editing Wikipedia and if interested suggest ways to enhance their engagement:

- Investigate the perceived benefits and value of contributing to Wikipedia for First Nations peoples, such as the potential to amplify their voices, preserve cultural heritage, or challenge misconceptions.
- Gather insights on the specific support, resources, or incentives that would encourage greater involvement from First Nations people, including training programs, community partnerships, or recognition for contributions.



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#### **4. Barriers to being involved**

Understand the existing barriers faced by First Nations people in participating and contributing to Wikipedia and explore potential strategies to overcome them:

- Identify the specific technological barriers, such as limited internet access or lack of digital literacy skills, that hinder or prevent First Nations peoples' participation in editing Wikipedia (or Wikimedia projects).
- Explore the cultural and systemic barriers that may exist, such as concerns over misappropriation of knowledge or the need for protocols and safeguards to ensure accurate representation and cultural sensitivity.

#### **5. Relevance and appropriateness**

Investigate the broader perception of Wikipedia among First Nations people and specifically assess its representation of First Nations cultures, histories, and perspectives:

- Assess the overall satisfaction with the representation of First Nations cultures and histories on Wikipedia and identify any gaps, biases, or inaccuracies.
- Explore the awareness and utilisation of Wikipedia as a platform for sharing First Nations perspectives and stories, including the challenges faced in getting their content published or recognised.
- Identify the gaps and challenges in providing a culturally safe environment on Wikipedia and explore suggestions or recommendations from First Nations people on how to enhance cultural safety measures, such as the inclusion of cultural protocols, guidelines, or training for contributors.

#### **6. Respect and collaboration**

Gather feedback and suggestions from First Nations people on how Wikipedia/Wikimedia and its community can better support and engage with their communities:

- Collect suggestions on ways to improve the content creation process on Wikipedia to be more inclusive and respectful of First Nations knowledge systems and protocols.
- Identify potential avenues for collaboration between First Nations communities and the Wikipedia community, such as partnerships with cultural institutions, community-led initiatives, or dedicated outreach efforts.


## A Review of the Literature

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Media Culture scholar Michael Mandiberg (2023, p. 21) has noted that ‘although Wikipedia has a widely studied gender gap, almost no research has attempted to discover if it has a comparable race and ethnicity gap among its editors or its articles’. One of Mandiberg’s research participants even described Wikipedia as ‘an ignorant/arrogant-white-male-dominated microcosm’ (2023, p.30). The current literature reveals that there is a paucity of research that examines Indigenous peoples’ experiences as readers and/or editors of Wikipedia in both a global and local context. From a detailed review of current literature, it is also clear that there is a dearth of representation of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous content on Wikipedia (Robichaud & McCracken, 2018). This is not surprising given that Indigenous peoples are generally framed as being incompatible with technology (Carlson & Frazer, 2021). Indigenous peoples are often also positioned as people of the past who have little interest in technological advancements let alone as being producers of technology (Brock Jr, 2020; Carlson & Frazer, 2021; Frazer, Carlson & Farrelly, 2022). As Guatemalan scholar, Arturo Arias (2019) asserts, there is widespread understanding that perceives Indigenous peoples as located outside technology’s purview. Technology, including digital technologies, remain associated with white, wealthy, highly urbanised subjects (Carlson & Frazer, 2021).

Similarly, anthropologist scholar Sophie Bjork-James (2021), who serves on the Board of Wiki Education (which supports university level teachers and scholars to bring information to a global audience), notes that Wikipedia contributors (also known as editors and Wikipedians) tend to be ‘overwhelmingly male, resident in the global North, more computer-literate, more Euro-American, wealthier, and also more formally educated, more often Christian or religiously unaffiliated, and sceptical of collective social statuses’ (pp. 209-210). Pākehā (non-Māori from New Zealand) scholar, Helen Timperley (2020) argues that a result of unrepresentative authorship on Wikipedia is unrepresentative content. Digitalisation scholar Maja van der Velden (2011) asserts that Wikipedia’s design does not allow for Indigenous communities to use Indigenous concepts and structures to share and organise knowledges and goes on to argue that Wikipedia articles pertaining to Indigenous knowledges and peoples are categorised in a manner that fragments Indigenous knowledges.

Wikipedia can play an important role in the information shared about Indigenous peoples. Its power to address bias through knowledge dissemination lies in its ubiquity (Lugosi, Patrie & Cromwell, 2023). Wikipedia is often highly ranked on search engine platforms such as Google (Halavais, 2017). As such, Wikipedia has the potential to play an important role in reconstructing stories and information shared about Indigenous peoples (Lugosi, Patrie & Cromwell, 2023). Papaschase Cree scholar Dwayne Donald (2004) asserts that Wikipedia has the ability to document stories that settler-colonial histories fail to mention, resulting in the re-centering of Indigenous experiences and knowledges.



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Shortly before this project commenced, a discussion paper was released by the Jumbunna Institute (University of Technology, Sydney) in collaboration with Wikimedia Australia (Thorpe, Sentance & Booker, 2023). The paper discussed how Wikimedia Australia could support Wikipedia and Wikidata editors to describe First Nations content in a self-determined and culturally appropriate manner. The paper also outlined limitations of current metadata and Wikipedia practice and opportunities for embedding and being led by First Nations worldviews and principles (Thorpe, Sentance & Booker, 2023). The limitations discussed included lack of visibility on national Indigenous thesauri tools, such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Thesauri, when reviews and updates occur, and the risk national guides pose of erasing the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and histories. The discussion paper recommended:

- **For Wikimedia:** strategies be developed to address settler narratives and increase First Nations representation; prioritise reviewing established toolkits and guidelines for decolonial and anti-racist descriptive practices; consider approaching future Wikimedia projects with an EOI process so that First Nations peoples and communities can be involved; build awareness of how First Nations peoples can become editors; consider how Indigenous research principles can be utilised in Wikipedia contexts
- **For Wikipedia and Wikidata editors:** specific guidelines and tools be developed to support Wikipedia editors in assessing, prioritising, and improving articles and descriptions; strategies to increase awareness in editors of the impact of description and classification practices and the potential for this information to be triggering to First Nations peoples

# Research Design

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## Research team

This research project was conducted by a First Nations research team from the Department of Critical Indigenous Studies at Macquarie University, led by Distinguished Professor Bronwyn Carlson, and was funded by Wikimedia Australia.

## Methodology

This research project utilised an Indigenist Research Methodology (Rigney, 1997). Indigenist research is research led by First Nations researchers whose informants are primarily First Nations peoples. The research project was ethically framed by scholar Lester Irabinna-Rigney's (1997) three interrelated core principles:

- 1. Resistance as the emancipatory imperative in Indigenist research:** Indigenist research is undertaken as part of the struggle of Indigenous recognition for self-determination. It allows Indigenous researchers to engage with the story of the survival and resistance of Indigenous peoples to racist oppression while enabling us to unmask continuing forms of oppression (Rigney, 1997, p.118).
- 2. Political Integrity in Indigenous research:** To responsibly serve and inform the political struggles of Indigenous peoples through setting our own political agenda and advocating for genuine self-determination. 'Indigenist research... takes the research into the heart of the Indigenous struggle' (Rigney, 1997, p.118).
- 3. Privileging Indigenous voices in Indigenous research:** 'Indigenous research is research which gives voice to Indigenous people' (Rigney, 1997, p.119).

The following guidelines were consulted in developing the research project:

- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research<sup>8</sup>
- Section 4.7 of the National Health & Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct of Human Research<sup>9</sup>
- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research<sup>10</sup>
- Macquarie University Indigenous Research Plan 2020-2025<sup>11</sup>
- Macquarie University Research Strategy and Framework<sup>12</sup>

Ethics approval was granted by Macquarie University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC Reference: 520231582753168).

<sup>8</sup> See <https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-02/aiatsis-code-ethics-jan22.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018>

<sup>10</sup> See <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/attachments/grant%20documents/The-australian-code-for-the-responsible-conduct-of-research-2018.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> See <https://www.mq.edu.au/about/about-the-university/commitment-indigenous-australians/research>

<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.mq.edu.au/research/our-research>

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## Methods

This research project utilised three qualitative data collection methods: individual semi-structured interviews, yarning circles, and an online survey.

Individual semi-structured interviews utilising yarning, a qualitative Indigenous research method involving the process of transforming information through conversation (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Shay, 2019). Yarning is considered a research tool that facilitates in-depth conversations in a relaxed and open manner contributing to more insightful discussions as it includes a process where the researcher purposefully builds a relationship that is accountable to those who are participating in the research (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010).

Qualitative interview data was also collected through yarning circles. Yarning circles involve yarning or storytelling within a respectful space. During the yarning circles, each participant takes turns to speak, with the direction of discussion and speakers being flexible and open to change. There are no universal models to conduct a yarning circle; power is negotiated depending on the circle's purpose. Carlson and Frazer (2018) suggest that yarning circles are useful in promoting ethical and culturally appropriate research practices. Both yarning and yarning circles can provide in-depth nuance and meaning that is often absent from quantitative research.

An interview guide was developed by Wikimedia Australia to aide in the individual interviews and yarning circles – see Appendix A.

An online survey (see Appendix B) was also created using Macquarie University endorsed platform LimeSurvey. The survey was distributed on the social media platform, X (formerly Twitter) by the Department of Critical Indigenous Studies, Macquarie University, and the Centre for Global Indigenous Futures. The online survey provided an alternative mode for First Nations peoples to participate in the research project, enabling them to provide input without needing to commit to an interview or yarning circle. Respondents who missed out on being able to participate in an interview or yarning circle were invited via email to participate in the online survey. There was no financial incentive for completing the survey. Survey responses were anonymous unless otherwise desired by the participant.

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## Participants

To be eligible for inclusion in this research project, participants had to be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person aged 18 years or older, with experience using Wikipedia as a reader and/or editor.

Participants were recruited via a Call for Participants flyer which was promoted via social media platforms, X (formerly Twitter) by the Department of Critical Indigenous Studies at Macquarie University (@IndigStudiesMQ), the Centre for Global Indigenous Futures (@IndigFutures) and on a private Facebook group of Walanga Muru, Macquarie University. Participants were offered the option of participating in individual interviews, yarning circles and/or an online survey. Participants opting to participate in interviews and/or yarning circles were offered a \$100 honorarium for their time and commitment.

A total of 192 expressions of interest were received via Microsoft Forms to participate in individual interviews and/or yarning circles, 181 of which met the eligibility criteria. The majority indicated a preference to participate using digital technology such as Zoom rather than face-to-face, which was to be conducted on campus at Macquarie University. As a result of these expressions of interest, the project had a total of 34 participants. Eighteen of these completed individual semi-structured interviews, one being in person (IN16) and the remaining 17 (IN01 to IN15, IN17 and IN18) via Zoom. A further 12 of these participated in yarning circles, with a total of four circles being conducted, two in person and two online (YC01 to YC04). All interviews and yarning circles were recorded for transcription purposes and to maintain anonymity all participants were identified with a code. There was diversity in participant ages, (ranging from 18-60s), genders, (including non-binary, queer, women, men), education levels (ranging from high school graduate to tertiary qualifications) and backgrounds, geographic locations, and cultural identity (across many nations including Torres Strait Islands).

It should be noted that a further total of 11 participants who turned up for individual interviews and/or yarning circles via Zoom were deemed as acting in bad faith. This refers to people who were not First Nations. In these instances, participants refused to turn on their camera and would only use the chat function rather than the microphone. As a technique to gauge whether they were a First Nations participant, interviewers asked them to identify the Country (ancestral homelands) they were zooming in from. In all 11 instances the individual responded by stating 'Australia' or similar responses. When questioned whether they were indeed a First Nations person many left the zoom of their own accord.

While 10 responses to the online survey were initially received, four of these were valid (SR01-SR04). The other responses were deemed invalid as participants did not meet the criteria (age, not being a First Nations person, or not having used Wikipedia), or failed to actually complete the survey.



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## Data Sovereignty

According to the AIATSIS:

Indigenous Data Sovereignty is the right of Indigenous peoples to govern the collection, ownership and application of data about Indigenous communities, peoples, lands, and resources. Its enactment mechanism Indigenous data governance is built around two central premises: the rights of Indigenous nations over data about them, regardless of where it is held and by whom; and the right to the data Indigenous peoples require to support nation rebuilding (AIATSIS, 2019).

The data collected as part of this project has been repatriated through deposition into the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Archive (ATSIDA). ATSIDA is a specialised and trusted research data management facility for Australian Indigenous research data, providing a central hub for the preservation of and access to digital research data on topics involving First Nations peoples. ATSIDA is managed by the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Data Archive Group, a team of researchers and experts in Indigenous data access based at the Jumbunna House of Learning and the UTS Library at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). Participants were asked to elect if they wish to have their data deposited into ATSIDA, with their decision having no impact on their participation in the research project.

# Findings

The following findings are presented grouped under the themes of the project objectives identified by Wikimedia Australia:

## 1. Trustworthiness, accuracy and cultural sensitivity

The majority of participants (85%, n=27) reported that they access Wikipedia pages at least once a week, indicating that the platform is likely highly utilised by First Nations peoples. Others indicated varied use of Wikipedia ranging from rarely to all the time, and dependant on what else was happening in their life at the time, such as study, for example:

I don't know. I haven't really used it a lot this year. But last year, when I was in school, I was using it heaps. – YC09

I definitely used it a lot when I was growing up before uni. But I don't use it very often anymore. – IN07


While half of all participants did not reply when asked if they used other Wiki platforms<sup>13</sup>, of the 17 that did, the majority (53%, n=9) indicated they had not heard of and not used them. Of the remaining participants, five responded they used other Wiki platforms, while three had heard of other Wiki platforms but have not used them.

Just over a third of participants (35%, n=12) shared the frequency of time that they find what they are looking for on Wikipedia. Three quarters of these participants (75%, n=9) indicated that they find what they are looking for on Wikipedia most or all the time, while a quarter (25%, n=3) reported they find the information sometimes or less than half the time.

Participants were asked to indicate what they believed to be true about how content is written and edited on Wikipedia. While two participants (6%) shared they did not know anything about how content is written and edited on Wikipedia, the majority (92%, n=32) gave responses that indicated they knew the following:

- Anyone can edit content on Wikipedia (26%, n=9)
- There are processes for writing and editing content on Wikipedia (18%, n=6)
- People who write content for Wikipedia may have a general interest and are not necessarily academically qualified to do so (9%, n=3)
- Multiple people can work on one article (3%, n=1)
- Anyone can create a Wikipedia page (3%, n=1)
- Anyone can delete someone's content on a Wikipedia page and replace it with their own (3%, n=1)
- Something must be noteworthy to be eligible to have a Wikipedia page (3%, n=1)
- Editors of content are volunteers (3%, n=1)

<sup>13</sup> There are a number of other platforms managed by the Wikimedia Foundation. These include Wikibooks, Wiktionary, Wikiquote, Wikimedia Commons, Wikisource, Wikiversity, Wikispecies, Wikidata, Wikifunctions, MediaWiki, Wikivoyage, Wikinews, and Meta-Wiki.



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However, some participants also indicated they believed the following popular misconceptions about Wikipedia:

- Page edits must be reviewed by other editors before they can go live (12%, n=4)
- An editing account needs to be verified (3%, n=1)
- Content on Wikipedia is edited by academics (3%, n=1)
- A Wikipedia page must have a certain number of references before it can be published (3%, n=1)
- People must undertake training before they are able to edit Wikipedia (3%, n=1)

One participant (3%) noted they were not sure if there is a process for cross-checking references as they have seen incorrect references on Wikipedia pages.


Participants were asked about the types of things they searched Wikipedia for. Most (74%, n=25) reported that they did not necessarily search Wikipedia directly, but rather accessed Wikipedia after searching on Google or other search engines. Most respondents indicated multiple search topics, with the most popular being:

- Education (university level coursework and research) (24%, n=8)
- Filmography of actors or TV shows (21%, n=7)
- Histories (including people, places, events) (21%, n=7)
- Popular culture (definition, memes, celebrities, musicians) (21%, n=7)
- General information (21%, n=7)
- To look up people and get personal/biographical information about them (18%, n=6)

Search topics that were less popular amongst participants were:

- Education (high school and primary school levels) (12%, n=4)
- Personal interests (12%, n=4)
- Education (level unspecified) (6%, n=2)
- Work (3% n=1)
- Australian political figures (3%, n=1)
- Health information (3%, n=1)
- Sport (statistics, people, events) (3%, n=1)
- Gardening (3%, n=1)

Almost a third of participants (32%, n=11) emphasised that they do not use Wikipedia for anything academic and would never reference Wikipedia as the source. Rather, Wikipedia was more likely to be used as a starting point for their research, or more for searching about popular culture interests.



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A total of 21% (n=7) of participants stated they would not use Wikipedia to look up content pertaining to First Nations peoples, communities, histories and cultural practices and that they would rather go to a First Nations site for this sort of information. One participant (3%) noted that Wikipedia would not be the first place they would look for information about their community:

When I go on there, it's generally speaking... I wouldn't go to Wikipedia, for example, if I was looking for information about mum, or family or culture, it just wouldn't even occur to me. So I guess it depends what the information is. – IN17

However, 18% (n=6) stated they had looked up information pertaining to the community/communities they are/think they are from. Of these six participants:

- All had looked up histories
- Four had looked up current events
- Three had looked up cultural practices
- Two had looked up language
- Two had looked up family members
- One had looked up totems
- One had looked up place names
- One had looked up general information

One participant who described feeling disconnected from their culture shared that being able to look up information on Wikipedia about their community has been helpful for them:

I guess as a man separated from Country and separated from culture, through my [redacted] ancestry from my mum's side, I guess for me, Wikipedia has been a source that's been useful to try to learn, you know, some basics.

It's not been my first source for understanding my Indigenous identity and heritage. I've definitely defaulted to AIATSIS and trying to look through source documents to understand family history but the amount that I found [on Wikipedia] was useful to me and was something I appreciate. – YC11

A total of 29% (n=10) of participants believed that secret and sacred First Nations knowledges should not be shared, and 12% (n=4) believed that no cultural information at all should be shared on Wikipedia. However, several participants (9%, n=3) expressed feeling that the more First Nations information available on Wikipedia, the better, as long as it has gone through a review process. The type of information they believed should have dedicated Wikipedia pages included:

- Elders from local communities (6%, n=2)
- Cultural practices, if they are explained correctly so that non-Indigenous people understand their significance (6%, n=2)
- Historical figures such as Bennelong, and modern-day figures such as Cathy Freeman (3%, n=1)
- First Nations languages (3%, n=1)

## 2. Engaging in editing

While all 34 participants identified as readers of Wikipedia only 21% (n=7) of participants identified that they were both readers and editors of Wikipedia.

Participant	
YC05	Editor for a couple of years. Tried to establish a particular page.
YC06	Editor for six months. Edited a few pages. Began editing by attending an editing workshop for Blakfellas in music. Has edited some 'Blak women in music' pages.
YC10	Edits often. Did not reference how many pages they had edited or how long they have been editing for. 95% of edits are done in the First Nations space which includes their community, place names, and First Nations AFL players.
YC11	Occasionally edits. Has edited one or two pages related to geology.
YC12	Sometimes edits. Did not reference how many pages they have edited. Has edited geology pages and their communities' page.
IN11	Used to edit more than a decade ago when they were in primary school. Would edit pages their friends were looking at and put jokes on them.
SR03	Has been editing for 5 months. Did not disclose how many pages they have edited. Edits both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pages.

### 3. Interest and opportunity to be involved

Participants who were readers only were asked if they had any interest in editing. A third (33%, n=9) of these were not interested in becoming Wikipedia editors, however a further 26% (n=7) reported they were interested and 19% (n=5) responded they might consider editing Wikipedia in the future. Reasons for not wanting to be involved in editing included:

- Cultural load<sup>14</sup>
- Lack of time
- Feeling like they do not have any content to contribute
- Lack of compensation
- Being unsure if they would be allowed to share the cultural knowledge they possess

One participant shared:


I certainly wouldn't do it as an individual person. I think it depends too, on what your own journey sort of is. I don't claim to know anywhere near as much as I need to know about my mob for a whole range of reasons. I wouldn't feel like comfortable, nor do I think I've earned the right to be able to edit these things [pages about their mob] specifically. But if I was part of a group of editors where we could collectively share our views. I think I'd consider it. I certainly wouldn't claim to do it on my own, because I feel like when people do things, do things like that in isolation, it can become very, very muddy. – IN18

### 4. Barriers to being involved

Some participants discussed how Wikipedia editing processes were not always easy to navigate and understand. For example, one participant mentioned they found editing a page difficult to do and this led to them not creating a page they had sought to create. They shared:

As far as editing goes, I've given up on it and completely disestablished the page. I just came up with so many obstacles when I was trying to build a page for the [redacted]. Every time I went to publish something, it kept saying this information can be found on a website and you can't do it... Basically, I found it really clumsy and hard. – YC05

<sup>14</sup> Cultural load is the additional load borne by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when they are the only, or one of few, First Nations people in a certain context. The term is typically used in an employment context. It may include additional work demands, expectations to educate others, or expectations to speak on behalf of other First Nations peoples. It is ultimately unpaid labour. (Bargallie, Carlson & Day, 2023, Make Us Count Report)



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This same participant also raised concerns regarding the lack of action taken when a complaint is made about other editors:

There's nobody, like you can't report it to anybody. And if you do, nothing ever happens anyway. So, I think that it's a dangerous platform for us. I think that it can be quite damaging to us, personally, to our careers, to our communities. – YC05

Another issue raised by some participants related to edits being able to be overridden and changed. Five participants (15%) raised concerns regarding racism on Wikipedia in both the content itself and the editing process, specifically regarding First Nations perspectives being removed or overridden in editing. Two participants who are editors gave examples of content they had uploaded regarding First Nations matters that had later been removed. One participant mentioned that they had made edits to a page pertaining to an Aboriginal NRL player and their edits kept getting removed. Another shared:


It was actually on the [redacted] page and they changed some of the bloodlines. I actually didn't get to the bottom of who it was. They changed a few things. They wrote a few things about fictional Aboriginal tribes and that's reappeared. I changed some of it, and then it just got changed back again. And they cite a catalogue record from the National Library. – YC05

Another participant raised the issue of editors not being paid and suggested that non-First Nations editors should take on the unpaid labour of editing First Nations content, as long as they consult with the relevant First Nations communities so that First Nations peoples do not have to take on that unpaid labour.

## **5. Relevance and appropriateness**

A total of 26% (n=9) of participants did not think that Wikipedia is a safe space for First Nations peoples. A further 9% (n=3) felt that the platform is safe sometimes and unsafe at other times, describing feeling unsafe when looking at cultural information. Another 9% (n=3) shared that they have always felt safe on the platform, and 6% (n=2) were not sure if they had ever felt safe or unsafe.

While 24% (n=8) of participants recalled at least one positive experience using Wikipedia, equally another 24% (n=8) recalled at least one negative experiencing using the platform. All positive experiences were associated with non-First Nations related content. Most negative experiences were associated with First Nations related content. A further 26% of participants (n=9) responded that they could not recall either positive or negative experiences.



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[W]hen I was doing research into artificial intelligence... I found really good articles, really good summaries that you could put into your own words and then check academically, so the artificial intelligence stuff that was a real highlight for me, that was amazing. – IN06

So [organisation name redacted] who have been organising their language revitalisation, they stated that Wikipedia had something, I don't know who put it up there, there was something about their languages. [They] asked for it be taken down and because of copyright law, which means you can't copyright language, they [Wikipedia] wouldn't do that... so it's still up there. – IN04

Another participant shared their grief when they have encountered sacred knowledge on Wikipedia that they were not meant to view, however, there was no warning on the platform to prevent them from viewing this information:

I feel like I've done something wrong by looking at that information. – YC04

Almost a third of participants (32%, n=11) raised concerns regarding racist content on Wikipedia. This included racist language, incorrect terminology and naming conventions, colonial stereotypes, citing colonial sources as fact, and lack of First Nations perspectives. A further 6% (n=2) of participants raised concerns about misinformation about First Nations peoples on the platform being underpinned by white supremacy and used to fuel racism offline.

Wikipedia can be very triggering for Indigenous people when the information is incorrect. – IN11

A number of participants highlighted updates that need to be made to existing Wikipedia pages:

- The Australian Frontier Wars<sup>15</sup> page needs to be updated to include First Nations perspectives and remove harmful language
- The Indigenous Australians<sup>16</sup> page has Creative Spirits listed as a citation for many of the claims made. The participant stated that Creative Spirits needs to be removed as a source as they believed it was not reputable

<sup>15</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian\\_frontier\\_wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_frontier_wars)

<sup>16</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous\\_Australians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_Australians)

- The Sorry Business<sup>17</sup> page redirects to another page which the participant felt was inappropriate, and fails to explain the nuance and diversity of Aboriginal nations and perpetuates inaccuracies
- The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897<sup>18</sup> page refers to blood quantum without challenging this concept as racist
- The 'Disputed pygmy presence in Australia' section on the Pygmy peoples<sup>19</sup> page promoted racism and eugenics, and the Norman Tyndale citations need to be removed
- The Walbunja<sup>20</sup> page needs to use present tense when referring to Walbunja peoples – as the participant stated, '*we are still here*' (YC07). It should be noted that at the time of compiling this report this appears to have already been changed
- The Gamilaraay<sup>21</sup> page uses the term 'traditional religion' which is inappropriate, and the Creative Spirits citations and other outdated sources need to be removed
- The William Ferguson<sup>22</sup> page could be updated to include references from First Nations sources

The majority (91%, n=31) of participants reported they do not fully trust content on Wikipedia. Half of participants (50%, n=17) said their respective high school and university education taught them that Wikipedia is not a trustworthy source. Only 6% (n=2) of participants deemed the platform trustworthy. More than a third (38%, n=13) of participants flagged seeing misinformation on the platform.

Reasons for mistrust of Wikipedia included the editable nature of the platform, experiences of viewing incorrect information in the past, outdated or expired citations, exclusive use of colonial citations, and Creative Spirits being cited on multiple First Nations pages.

I really like Wikipedia, but I don't trust it. I will go there as a starting place and then just look at their reference list and see if any of that stuff could be useful for me. But yeah, I don't trust it. Really because you can just go in and change it at any time. I have come across several times people have just put celebrities' death dates on Wikipedia, but they've still been alive. So, it's stuff like that. – YC06

<sup>17</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian\\_Aboriginal\\_religion\\_and\\_mythology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Aboriginal_religion_and_mythology)


<sup>18</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aboriginals\\_Protection\\_and\\_Restriction\\_of\\_the\\_Sale\\_of\\_Opium\\_Act\\_1897](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aboriginals_Protection_and_Restriction_of_the_Sale_of_Opium_Act_1897)

<sup>19</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pygmy\\_peoples#:~:text=The%20terms%20%22Asiatic%20Pygmies%22%20and, population%20of%20 East%20Asian%20phenotype](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pygmy_peoples#:~:text=The%20terms%20%22Asiatic%20Pygmies%22%20and, population%20of%20 East%20Asian%20phenotype)

<sup>20</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walbunja>

<sup>21</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamilaraay>

<sup>22</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Ferguson\\_\(Australian\\_Aboriginal\\_leader\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Ferguson_(Australian_Aboriginal_leader))



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It is important to note that 9% (n=3) of participants did point out that even though they cannot fully trust Wikipedia, they have found mostly accurate information on there in their areas of expertise.


Concerns about the anonymity of editors were raised by 15% (n=5) of participants. A further 9% (n=3) of participants raised concerns regarding editors not having to disclose their relationship to the content they edit because of the ability to remain anonymous:

The moderation aspect is definitely something that is very, I think untransparent... Anonymity is, I feel like a little bit of the point of the platform. But it would be nice to have a bit more, I guess, information about who moderators are. Not necessarily personally, but why they are moderators. And this is where it's kind of a double-edged sword. People might have more confidence to actually contribute to the platform if they are anonymous... You know, things like science can get really personality based. Somebody could take an issue with a contributor because they know who they are and just start a war within the editor's comments... purely based on the personality of the person making contributions. A good compromise might be that moderators are identified... But yeah, that's kind of why there is definitely a positive to the anonymity. But obviously, there are a lot of problems as well. I recognise that it is a challenging concept and challenging thing to get right. – YC12

A further 9% (n=3) of respondents said that First Nations content should only be written by First Nations peoples with cultural connections to the content they are writing, which is difficult to prove on a platform like Wikipedia.

The way Wikipedia pages are structured generally presents information as linear and objective. While 15% (n=5) of participants believe the way information is simplified and organised on Wikipedia is beneficial, 9% (n=3) of participants were concerned about content being presented as overgeneralised and simplified. A total of 15% (n=5) of participants emphasised the importance of presenting multiple First Nations perspectives on matters such as Country boundaries, Dreaming stories (if these are shared on Wikipedia), and language. They noted that it is especially important for non-First Nations peoples to see and understand that First Nations issues are complex and that there are almost always multiple perspectives on matters.

Obviously, there's not one homogenous Aboriginal person who could speak for everyone. – IN07



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Wikipedia is not set up to deal with the complexities of Indigenous life. – IN04

I think the way that our knowledges and our cultures operate isn't necessarily suited to a page on Wikipedia because there's so many different layers to it even within like a single story. And that's hard to communicate on a platform like Wikipedia because the whole purpose of Wikipedia is easily digestible, simplified information. – YC02

What's my truth is not your truth. So I can say, well, this is from my community, and it can be different half an hour down the road. I think that's the importance of really localising what you what you say. – IN15


## 6. Respect and collaboration

Approximately a third of participants (32%, n=11) agreed that First Nations content should be decided by the community/communities the information pertains to.

Any sort of knowledge should be managed by the people who that knowledge belongs to. Not just cultural knowledge, personal knowledge, anything of a sensitive nature. – IN17

One participant offered that if knowledge spans multiple communities, communities should work with each other to control what content is shared. Another participant stated that this content should be approved by a collective group of Elders, not just one Elder. Another participant stated that key stakeholders such as Aboriginal Land Councils should be involved in deciding what information is presented on Wikipedia. This participant pondered whether a First Nations advisory board would be useful for Wikimedia Australia, suggesting the board being made up of First Nations academics from a range of universities in Australia could be useful. One participant suggested 'gating' some information like the AIATSIS does so that access is only granted to people who the First Nations community determines are eligible. Another participant suggested tagging pages with labels such as 'Wiradjuri' so that these pages can be checked by nominated members of the community for accuracy/verification.

A total of 24% (n=8) of participants felt that editors should seek permission from relevant First Nations communities before they edit content relating to First Nations peoples. However, 15% (n=5) of participants felt that non-First Nations editors should not edit pages that pertain to First Nations matters. One participant stated they believed it is unrealistic for only First Nations peoples to be writing content, and that it would be more realistic for content to be co-constructed with non-First Nations editors.



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While participants noted there is misinformation on Wikipedia regarding First Nations matters, the platform has the capacity to have this misinformation corrected due to its editability. Two participants commented on outdated citations being used, noting that there is opportunity for citations on pages pertaining to First Nations matters to be reviewed and updated. As one participant described:

This platform [Wikipedia] has the potential to disrupt colonial modes of production and it also has the potential to perpetuate them. – IN07

Several participants (9%, n=3) raised concerns around First Nations peoples often being represented as homogenous, noting there is an opportunity for localised knowledge to appear on pages because of the unlimited number of pages that can be presented on Wikipedia.

Approximately one third of participants (32%, n=11) believed that Wikipedia can be used as an educational tool for First Nations related content. A total of 18% (n=6) of participants believed it can be used to educate non-First Nations peoples about First Nations matters, and 15% (n=5) of participants believe it can be used to educate both First Nations and non-First Nations peoples about First Nations matters. Two participants (6%) of participants commented on how they believe a benefit of the platform is that it can show how peoples, places, events, histories are interconnected.

I definitely think the benefits are around demystifying Aboriginal culture for people. The amount of people you meet, who go, 'oh, I've never met an Aboriginal person before'. Like you probably have, we just don't run around with our spear in our lap-laps. – IN15

There is also an opportunity by increasing the number of First Nations editors to correct large scales of misinformation pertaining to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters. Four participants who are editors commented that correcting misinformation regarding First Nations matters is a motivation for them to edit.



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A total of 15% (n=5) of participants felt that not all cultural information should be available on Wikipedia but agreed that it is a useful platform for helping disconnected First Nations peoples to reconnect with community and culture. One participant asserted that any information that can help those who have been disconnected from their culture should be made available on Wikipedia. They believed that continuing to have such information on Wikipedia, if done in consultation with the community/communities it pertains to may be useful in supporting First Nations peoples reconnect with their community and culture.

Information about different cultural communities and locations, with correct academic resources used should be up there. If they [readers] could have some way of checking the source of the information, then I definitely think cultural stuff is valuable for people, because there's many displaced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people due to, you know, settlement and Stolen Generations and things like that, who are trying to find their way back home. So resources, like Wikipedia could be supportive for people to do that initial research to get a bit of a bit of traction on some ideas they might have. – IN09

There is an opportunity for a number of cultural safety standards to be implemented to improve Wikipedia for First Nations peoples. For example, two (6%) participants flagged that there are no cultural warnings or disclaimers that come up when a page references a First Nations person who has passed away and two (6%) participants raised concerns that there are no Acknowledgements of Country on Wikipedia at all. One participant also suggested:

There should be a “form guide” for common phrases that require capitalisation, and for terms, phrases, and approaches that are racist. – SR01

A total of 15% (n=5) of participants suggested that all editors should critically reflect on their positionality when editing Wikipedia pages. Further, 15% (n=5) of participants advised that editors need to cite First Nations sources when writing content, not just on First Nations pages, however, especially on these pages.



# Conclusions

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Based on the data collected as part of this research project through interviews, yarning circles, and the online survey, the following conclusions can be drawn:

## 1. Use

- It is likely that Wikipedia is popularly utilised by First Nations peoples, with relative satisfaction, for a wide range of topics and purposes.
- It is likely that many First Nations peoples view Wikipedia as more of a starting point for any academic research rather than a trustworthy enough source, but as a reliable enough source of information for other topics outside of academia such as popular culture interests.

## 2. Awareness

It is likely that many First Nations peoples have a limited awareness of how content is written and edited on Wikipedia, and of other Wiki platforms, and this can result in a lack of understanding of how they as individuals can have agency in addressing misinformation or registering complaints.

## 3. Editability

For First Nations content, the open editability of Wikipedia serves as an advantage as well as a disadvantage. It fosters accessibility, but also enables the dissemination and perpetuation of misinformation.

## 4. Benefits of First Nations content

- While many First Nations peoples are likely to not rely on Wikipedia for any information pertaining to First Nations peoples, communities, histories, cultural practices, languages and current events, it is important to note that others do and will, for a variety of reasons.
- There are benefits for both First Nations peoples and non-First Nations people in being able to access certain First Nations-specific information on Wikipedia.

## 5. Cultural safety

Some content on Wikipedia that pertains to First Nations peoples can be culturally unsafe for First Nations peoples to view, and the absence of any warnings can mean it can be unintentionally viewed.



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## 6. Racism

There is racism in the content and editing of Wikipedia pages that contain information specifically pertaining to First Nations peoples and cultures, whereby content is incorrect and offensive, and First Nations perspectives are absent, removed and overridden.

## 7. Control of First Nations content

- There are no hard and fast rules for exactly what information pertaining to First Nations peoples and cultures is appropriate to be made available on Wikipedia, and there are valid concerns regarding who has control over deciding this.
- Content on Wikipedia that pertains to First Nations peoples is regularly written, read and edited by other non-First Nations people without any First Nations input or control.
- There is interest amongst First Nations people in being editors of Wikipedia content, but there are obstacles to this, including cultural load, difficulty navigating and understanding the editing process, lack of time, lack of compensation, and uncertainty regarding the appropriateness of sharing certain cultural knowledge.

# Recommendations

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The following recommendations are intended for Wikimedia Australia however some may be relevant or require consideration across the wider Wikimedia movement.

## 1. Establish a First Nations Advisory Board

Establish a First Nations Advisory Board for Wikimedia Australia comprised of paid First Nations peoples from a range of sectors. The purpose of the Advisory Board will be to advise and assist in how best Wikimedia Australia can build relationships with First Nations communities, recognising the heterogeneous nature of First Nations cultures and communities, the complexity of the information to be included, and the need to accommodate and respect multiple viewpoints. The aim of these relationships will be determined by the Advisory Board, but may include:

- Sharing information that is on Wikipedia with the First Nations communities that it is specific to
- Investigate ways of increasing control over content on specific Wikipedia pages to the communities they pertain to (including being able to lock and/or gate content)
- Having more localised information available on the platform
- Ensuring multiple First Nations perspectives on various matters

## 2. Increase awareness

Given that most participants did not have a strong idea about how content is written and edited on Wikipedia and the level of distrust in the accuracy of information the platform contains, it is suggested that awareness raising activities around the current process be conducted with First Nations communities. More awareness around how content is written and edited may attract more First Nations editors.

These activities can be developed in consultation with the Advisory Board, and may involve creating and housing resources that explain protocols around how content is written and edited on Wikipedia, as well as simplified how-to editing guides for editors. These resources could be housed on Wikipedia and also Wikimedia Australia's website. A social media campaign could explain these protocols in easily digestible posts. A paid First Nations intern could be recruited to develop these resources.

It is also recommended that the current complaints procedure be reviewed to assess if it is fit-for-purpose and promoted as part of awareness-raising activities.

## 3. Re-evaluate open-access editing of First Nations content

In consultation with the Advisory Board, it is worth re-evaluating if open-access editing is indeed appropriate for First Nations content on Wikipedia. Wikimedia Australia may find they gain more interest from various First Nations communities if there is the assurance that content will not be modified without their consent.

#### 4. Encourage First Nations participation as editors

The level of interest in becoming editors of Wikipedia expressed by participants in this project indicates there is feasibility in creating editing training opportunities for First Nations peoples. One participant who was an editor who did attend an editing workshop at Queensland State Library shared that they do not think they would have been able to begin editing on Wikipedia without that support. Another participant volunteered that they wanted to be part of a First Nations editing community, suggesting it would be helpful to have an editing community, or multiple editing communities for different communities to be able to come together as a collective.

It is also suggested that paid opportunities for First Nations editors be established, including to undertake editor training, partake in editing, and deliver editing workshops. Opportunities to pay First Nations editors could include internship models similar to the previous First Nations Wikipedian in Residence<sup>23</sup> program facilitated by Wikimedia Australia.

#### 5. Address racist and otherwise offensive or incorrect content

In consultation with the Advisory Board, it is recommended that Wikimedia Australia takes steps to actively address racist and otherwise offensive or incorrect content on Wikipedia pertaining to First Nations peoples and cultures. These steps may include developing a Cultural Safety Standards policy for Wikipedia editors, that can include:

- A guide for Wikipedia editors explaining the importance of language and terminology and the impact incorrect use of these can have on First Nations peoples
- A guide for citing First Nations sources
- The inclusion of cultural warnings or disclaimers for pages containing information pertaining to First Nations peoples and cultures, particularly noting a page may reference a First Nations person who has passed away
- Implementing a tagging procedure so that nominated members of various First Nations communities can review the page/s
- Encouraging editors who edit First Nations content (whether they are First Nations or not) to provide information on their editors profile about their relationship to the content they edit


It is also recommended Wikimedia Australia conduct a review of citations used on Wikipedia pages regarding First Nations matters including the removal of all Creative Spirits and outdated citations and adding First Nations sources.

<sup>23</sup>See [https://wikimedia.org.au/wiki/First\\_Nations\\_Wikipedian\\_in\\_Residence](https://wikimedia.org.au/wiki/First_Nations_Wikipedian_in_Residence)

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# Appendices


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## **Appendix A: Individual semi-structured interviews and yarning circle guide questions**

The below guide questions were provided by Wikimedia Australia.

User guide questions (for people who use Wikipedia to view articles):


1. How often do you use Wikipedia?
2. Do you use any other wiki platforms or sister projects, such as WikiCommons (images), Wikidata, Wikivoyage, WikiQuote, etc.
3. What do you use it for?
4. What are your overall impressions of Wikipedia?
5. Have you had generally positive experiences using Wikipedia? Please describe?
6. Have you had negative experiences using Wikipedia? Please describe?
7. Overall, do you find what you are looking for?
8. Is it generally accurate (maybe categorised into something like: never, some of the time, most of the time, all of the time)?
9. What do you know about how Wikipedia is written/created?
10. What sort of information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures have you looked for on Wikipedia?
11. Is it appropriate/should information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures be openly available on Wikipedia?
12. Who are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personalities that come up on Wikipedia?
13. What would be the benefits?
14. What are your concerns?
15. What guidance would you give Wikipedia editors [this could be teased out further to First Nations editors, or other general editors]
16. Is Wikipedia a safe space for First Nations people? Why or why not?
17. Do you want to engage further with the Wikipedia platform or community?
18. Who would be key people in your community to share appropriate information?
19. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us or tell us about?



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Editor guide questions (for people who edit Wikipedia):

1. Have you edited Wikipedia before?
2. Approximately how long have you been editing? Are you a beginner, intermediate or advanced [possibly including 'not sure']?
3. What's your motivation for editing? (If you are a long term editor what keeps you coming back?)
4. What barriers stop you from editing? (do we prompt with suggestions: access to internet/ computer, time, technical skills, can't share sensitive knowledge, don't know enough about Wikipedia (trust and safety), etc?)
5. What policies or rules on Wikipedia would you like to understand better?
6. Are you aware of any Wikipedia policies on First Nations content? If so, what?
7. How would you go about finding out more about editing First Nations content?
8. Do you use any offline resources to help with editing (eg, Indigenous referencing guides, Indigenous archive policies, GLAM institution guides, etc)
9. How would you assess whether First Nations content is suitable or appropriate for Wikipedia?
10. What are the challenges with adding or improving First Nations content (maybe prompt: reliable secondary sources, oral histories?)
11. Do you identify yourself as a First Nations editor online? (Through your user page, talk pages, discussions, type of content you edit, etc). If so, how (and why do they choose those methods)?
12. If not, why not?
13. Do you feel represented on Wikipedia? What would change this?
14. Have you had positive experiences editing Wikipedia? Please describe?
15. Have you had negative experiences editing Wikipedia? Please describe?
16. From your experiences and perspective, what could or should be different? What change/s would you like to see?
17. Do you communicate with other First Nation editors of Wikipedia or Wiki platforms? Maybe through a Wikiproject, common interests, employment role, or community of practice?
18. Would you be interested in connecting and engaging with other First Nations editors?

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19. Do you edit privately or do you talk and share with others in your family/community about editing Wikipedia?
  20. If so, do they support your activity?
  21. If they don't support your editing activity, what is it that they don't agree with or like?
  22. If they do, what is it that they like and support?
  23. If a free training workshop was held near you would you attend it?
  24. Would you attend meetups with other people to edit Wikipedia together?
  25. Would you be more or less likely to read Wikipedia in a language other than English?
  26. If Wikipedia was available in your community's language would you edit and improve it?
  27. Do you think your community would be interested?
  28. When looking at this Wikipedia page (provide an example), how do you think it could be improved?
  29. Show sample pages and ask for comments.
  30. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us or tell us about?

## Appendix B: Online survey questions

Question	Response Options	Logic
At the completion of the project, do you consent to your data being repatriated through deposition into the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Archive ATSIDA is a specialised and trusted research data management facility for Australian Indigenous research data, providing a central hub for the preservation of and access to digital research data on topics involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. ATSIDA is managed by the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Data Archive group, a team of researchers and experts in Indigenous data access based at the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning and the UTS Library at the University of Technology (UTS), Sydney.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, I consent to my data being repatriated and deposited into ATSIDA.</li> <li>• No, I do not consent to my data being repatriated and deposited into ATSIDA. (This does not impact your participation in this survey).</li> </ul>	n/a
<b>Information About You</b>		
What is your age?	(Single choice) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17 years old or below</li> <li>• 18 – 24 years old</li> <li>• 25 – 34 years old</li> <li>• 35 – 44 years old</li> <li>• 45 – 54 years old</li> <li>• 55 – 64 years old</li> <li>• 65 – 74 years old</li> <li>• 75 years old or older</li> </ul>	If 17 years old or below is selected, the survey will end.

Question	Response Options	Logic
<b>Information About You</b>		
Are you an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person?	(Single choice) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, I am Aboriginal</li> <li>• Yes, I am Torres Strait Islander</li> <li>• Yes, I am both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</li> </ul>	If 'No, I am not Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander' is selected, the survey will end.
Are you an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person?	(Single choice) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, I am Aboriginal</li> <li>• Yes, I am Torres Strait Islander</li> <li>• Yes, I am both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</li> </ul>	If 'No, I am not Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander' is selected, the survey will end.
Please feel free to share which mob/s you are from:	(Open text) and (Optional)	n/a
What is your gender? (Select any or all that apply):	(Multiple Choice) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agender</li> <li>• Non-binary</li> <li>• Woman</li> <li>• Man</li> <li>• Gender-fluid</li> <li>• Other (open text)</li> </ul>	n/a
Have you participated in an individual interview, yarning circle, or focus group for this research project (First Nations on Wikipedia)?	(Single choice) and (Optional) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No</li> <li>• Yes, I participated in an individual interview</li> <li>• Yes, I participated in a yarning circle or focus group</li> </ul>	n/a
For the purpose of sending you a one-page summary of initial findings and a copy of the final report, what is your email address? At the completion of the project, your email address will be deleted. Skip this question if you prefer not to answer it.	(Open text) and (Optional)	n/a

Question	Response Options	Logic
<b>Use of Wikipedia</b>		
How do you use Wikipedia?	(Single select) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I use Wikipedia to view information pages (articles)</li> <li>I am a Wikipedia editor</li> <li>I am both a user and editor of Wikipedia</li> </ul>	If 'I use Wikipedia to view information pages (articles)' is selected, questions in the 'Editor' section will NOT be shown.
How often do you use Wikipedia? (If you are both a user and an editor, please use the 'comment' text box to explain your user and editing frequencies):	(Single select with comment option) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least once per day</li> <li>At least once per week</li> <li>At least once per fortnight</li> <li>At least once per month</li> <li>At least once every two-three months</li> <li>At least once every six months</li> </ul>	If 'I have never used Wikipedia' is selected, the survey will end.
<b>For Wikipedia Users (this section will only be visible to those who have selected either 'I use Wikipedia to view information pages (articles)' or 'I am both a user and editor of Wikipedia').</b>		
Approximately how long have you been editing Wikipedia for? (Please comment the number of years and/or months in the corresponding text boxes):	(Drop down) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Select number) months and years</li> </ul>	n/a
What is your motivation for editing on Wikipedia?	(Open text) and (Optional)	n/a
Do you experience any barriers to editing on Wikipedia? (If yes, please use the comment box to elaborate on what these barriers are):	(Single choice with optional comment) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No</li> <li>Yes</li> </ul>	n/a

Question	Response Options	Logic
<b>For Wikipedia Users (this section will only be visible to those who have selected either 'I use Wikipedia to view information pages (articles)' or 'I am both a user and editor of Wikipedia').</b>		
Are you aware of any Wikipedia policies on First Nations content? (If yes, please list what policies these are using the open text box):	(Single choice with optional comment) an (Optional with Nudge) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>	n/a
What policies or rules on Wikipedia would you like to understand better?	(Open text) and (Optional with Nudge)	n/a
How would you go about finding out more about editing First Nations related content?	(Open text) and (Optional with Nudge)	n/a
Do you use any offline resources to help with editing?	(Single choice with optional comment) an (Optional with Nudge) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>	n/a
What resources are these? (Please tick all that apply. If you select other/s, please list them in the comment text box):	(Single choice with optional comment) an (Optional with Nudge) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous referencing guides</li> <li>• Indigenous archive</li> </ul>	n/a
How would you assess whether First Nations related content is appropriate for Wikipedia?	(Open text) and (Optional with Nudge)	n/a

Question	Response Options	Logic
<b>For Wikipedia Users (this section will only be visible to those who have selected either 'I use Wikipedia to view information pages (articles)' or 'I am both a user and editor of Wikipedia').</b>		
Do you use any other Wiki platforms or associated projects? (Please tick all that apply):	(Multiple choice): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No</li> <li>• WikiCommons (images)</li> <li>• Wikidata</li> <li>• Wikivoyage</li> <li>• WikiQuote</li> </ul>	n/a
Please tell us what you use Wikipedia for (please tick all that apply):	(Multiple choice): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work</li> <li>• School</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• General Knowledge</li> <li>• Leisure</li> <li>• Other (open text)</li> </ul>	n/a
What sort of information have you looked for on Wikipedia or other Wiki platforms about First Nations peoples? (Please select all that apply. You can elaborate on your choices in the corresponding textbook to right of each answer):	(Multiple choice with optional comments): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural knowledges</li> <li>• Cultural practices</li> <li>• Particular groups, communities, and mobs</li> <li>• Individual people who are First Nations</li> </ul>	n/a
Do you find what you are looking for when using Wikipedia?	(Single choice): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always</li> <li>• Mostly</li> <li>• Sometimes</li> <li>• Rarely</li> <li>• Never</li> </ul>	n/a

Question	Response Options	Logic
<b>For Wikipedia Users (this section will only be visible to those who have selected either 'I use Wikipedia to view information pages (articles)' or 'I am both a user and editor of Wikipedia').</b>		
What do you know about how Wikipedia is written/created?	(Open text)	n/a
In your experience using Wikipedia, please share your thoughts on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and First Nations peoples more broadly are represented:	(Open text)	n/a
In your experience using Wikipedia, please share your thoughts on the accuracy of information regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and First Nations peoples more broadly:	(Open text)	n/a
Should cultural knowledges and practices be shared on Wikipedia? (Please use the open text box to explain your answer):	(Single choice with optional comment) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> <li>• I am not sure</li> </ul>	n/a
What guidance would you give Wikipedia editors who edit First Nations content:	(Open text) and (Optional)	n/a
Would you consider becoming a Wikipedia Editor? (Please select one choice and then elaborate on why you picked this choice in the 'comment' box):	(Single choice with optional comment) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> <li>• I am not sure</li> </ul>	This question will ONLY be displayed if 'I use Wikipedia to view information pages (articles)' is selected.

Question	Response Options	Logic
<b>For Wikipedia Users (this section will only be visible to those who have selected either 'I use Wikipedia to view information pages (articles)' or 'I am both a user and editor of Wikipedia').</b>		
Is there anything else that you would like to share?	(Open text) and (Optional)	If the person selected, 'I use Wikipedia to view information pages (articles)', they will be taken to the 'Stage 2 Opt In' section from this question.
<b>Wikipedia Editors (this section will only be visible to those who have selected either 'I am a Wikipedia editor' or 'I am both a user and editor of Wikipedia').</b>		
Approximately how long have you been editing Wikipedia for? (Please comment the number of years and/or months in the corresponding text boxes):	(Drop down) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Select number) months and years</li> </ul>	n/a
What is your motivation for editing on Wikipedia?	(Open text) and (Optional)	n/a
Do you experience any barriers to editing on Wikipedia? (If yes, please use the comment box to elaborate on what these barriers are):	(Single choice with optional comment) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No</li> <li>Yes</li> </ul>	n/a
Are you aware of any Wikipedia policies on First Nations content? (If yes, please list what policies these are using the open text box):	(Single choice with optional comment) an (Optional with Nudge) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No</li> <li>Yes</li> </ul>	n/a
What policies or rules on Wikipedia would you like to understand better?	(Open text) and (Optional with Nudge)	n/a

**Wikipedia Editors (this section will only be visible to those who have selected either 'I am a Wikipedia editor' or 'I am both a user and editor of Wikipedia').**

How would you go about finding out more about editing First Nations related content?	(Open text) and (Optional with Nudge)	n/a
Do you use any offline resources to help with editing?	(Single choice with other option) and (Optional with Nudge): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No</li> </ul>	n/a
What resources are these? (Please tick all that apply. If you select other/s, please list them in the comment text box):	(Multiple choice with 'Other' option) and (Optional with Nudge): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indigenous referencing guides</li> <li>Indigenous archive</li> </ul>	n/a
How would you assess whether First Nations related content is appropriate for Wikipedia?	(Open text) and (Optional with Nudge)	n/a
Are there challenges with adding or improving First Nations related content on Wikipedia? (If yes, please use the open text box to elaborate on this):	(Single choice with optional comment) and (Optional with Nudge) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No</li> <li>Yes</li> </ul>	n/a
From your experiences and perspective, are there are changes you would like to see on Wikipedia? (If yes, please use the open text box to elaborate):	(Single choice with optional comment) and (Optional with Nudge) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No</li> <li>Yes</li> </ul>	n/a

**Wikipedia Editors (this section will only be visible to those who have selected either 'I am a Wikipedia editor' or 'I am both a user and editor of Wikipedia').**

<p>Do you identify yourself as a First Nations editor online?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes, please tick all that apply</li> <li>• You can use the 'Other' option to add anything not already listed</li> </ul>	<p>(Multiple choice with 'Other' option and corresponding open text box) and (Optional with Nudge):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No, I do not identify myself as a First Nations editor online</li> <li>• Yes, on my user page</li> <li>• Yes, on talk pages</li> <li>• Yes, on discussions</li> <li>• Yes, on the type of content I edit</li> </ul>	n/a
<p>Why do you use choose {whatever options are selected for previous question} for identifying yourself?</p>	<p>(Single choice with optional comment) and (Optional with Nudge)</p>	n/a
<p>Do you communicate with other First Nation editors of Wikipedia or Wiki platforms? (Please select all that apply):</p>	<p>(Multiple Choice) and (Optional with Nudge)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No</li> <li>• Yes, through Wikiproject</li> <li>• Yes, through common interests</li> <li>• Yes, through my employment role</li> <li>• Yes, through my community of practice</li> </ul>	n/a

**Wikipedia Editors (this section will only be visible to those who have selected either 'I am a Wikipedia editor' or 'I am both a user and editor of Wikipedia').**

Would you be interested in connecting and engaging with other First Nations editors?	<p>(Single choice) and (Optional with Nudge)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No and I am currently not connected with any other First Nations Wikipedia editors</li> <li>• Yes and I am currently not connected with any other First Nations Wikipedia editors</li> <li>• No and I am already connected and engaging with other Wikipedia editors and do not wish to connect with more First Nations editors</li> <li>• Yes and I am already connected and engaging with other Wikipedia editors and am looking to connect further with other First Nations editors</li> </ul>	n/a
How would you like to connect?	(Open text) and (Optional with Nudge)	If a person selects either 'Yes and I am currently not connected with any other First Nations Wikipedia editors' or 'Yes and I am already connected and engaging with other Wikipedia editors and am looking to connect further with other First Nations editors', they will be shown this question.

**Wikipedia Editors (this section will only be visible to those who have selected either 'I am a Wikipedia editor' or 'I am both a user and editor of Wikipedia').**

Do you talk about your Wikipedia editing? (Click all that apply):	(Multiple choice with 'Other' option) and (Optional with Nudge) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No, I do not talk about my Wikipedia editing with anybody</li> <li>• Yes, I talk about it with my family</li> <li>• Yes, I talk about it with my community</li> <li>• Yes, I talk about it with my friends</li> <li>• Yes, I talk about it with my colleagues</li> </ul>	n/a
If there was a free opportunity located near you to upskill your Wikipedia editing skills, would you attend?	(Single choice) and (Optional with Nudge) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>	n/a
Would you attend meetups with other people to edit Wikipedia together?	(Single choice) and (Optional with Nudge) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> </ul>	n/a
Is there anything else that you would like to share?	(Open text) and (Optional)	n/a

